

## Clark County Hoarding Task Force

# ***Guidelines for the Investigation of Hoarding Behavior and Issues with Elder, Child, and Animal Abuse or Neglect caused by Hoarding Behavior***

- *How to investigate complaints*
- *How to refer complaints to the proper agency*
- *How to request assistance in investigating hoarding behavior*



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# GENERAL INFORMATION

## What is hoarding behavior?

Hoarding is the excessive storage of items in and around a house that interferes with healthy and safe day-to-day use of the house for family or social life. Hoarding occurs when extreme amounts of items like newspapers, magazines, empty containers, old clothing, paper, rotting food, animals, and, sometimes, animal manure, collect inside or around a house.

## How is it different from having too much clutter or collectibles?

Hoarding behavior goes beyond such activities, causing problems with odors, fire safety, insects or rodents, and sometimes, the neglect of people or animals. Generally speaking, hoarders are unaware that their lifestyle is a problem and rarely seek treatment.

1. Is there an imminent safety threat to the occupants associated with the accumulation of items or animals?
  - a. Is there a problem with fire exits, structural safety, or immediate danger to the safety of children, adults, elders, or animals?
  - b. Is there an accumulation of items that pose a risk for falls or injury?
2. Is there an imminent health, abuse, or neglect threat to the occupants associated with the accumulation of items or animals?
  - a. Is there a problem with rodents due to large piles of garbage?
  - b. Is the occupant unable to adequately care for any animals in the house?
  - c. Is there a large accumulation of animal urine or feces?
  - d. Is there a large accumulation of human urine or feces?
  - e. Are there insects or rodents in the house?
3. Are there conditions that pose a health and safety nuisance to the neighbors, but are not imminently dangerous to the occupant?
  - a. Has the accumulation of items led to a lack of adequate housekeeping?
  - b. Are there strong odors associated with feces, urine, or garbage in the house?
  - c. Is there a problem with rodents due to large piles of garbage?

## Why do people hoard things?

Hoarding behavior has many different causes:

1. the items are perceived as valuable, even if they are old and damaged
2. the items provide a sense of security
3. there is a fear of losing valuable items
4. the items are a substitute for love not found in other people
5. there may be a fear of losing valuable personal information
6. there may be physical limitations and frailties that make cleaning difficult

## **What is animal hoarding?**

Animal hoarding is a type of hoarding that involves the keeping and care of large numbers of animals. Frequently, there are problems with the health of the animals and with the accumulation of waste materials from the animals. Sometimes, the neglect is so severe that it is considered animal cruelty.

## **Why is hoarding behavior a public safety issue?**

Collecting large amounts of items may:

1. cause a severe fire hazard in a house that is difficult to suppress
2. block fire escapes from the house
3. encourage insects or rodents in the neighborhood
4. cause unhealthy living conditions in the neighborhood
5. signal neglect of animals or people
6. cause building code violations or structural damage
7. cause sanitation or odor nuisances from garbage, trash, or animal wastes.

## **How can a concerned neighbor, friend, or family member intervene?**

Hoarding behavior is a mental health issue and a public health problem. Usually, the behavior has been occurring for a long time and requires patience and understanding. Frequently, it requires the help of other people and agencies. Neglect or abuse issues associated with elders, children, or animals may require emergency interventions. Code violations resulting from neglect or collection of materials may require emergency actions. It is not recommended that friends or family members intervene without the cooperation of the hoarder, as this could lead to the development of dangerous behaviors.

Concerned family members, friends, or neighbors can call the Clark County Hoarding Task Force, and provide a clear, brief description of the problem, giving names, addresses and phone numbers of the persons affected.

The Hoarding Task Force may be contacted at (937) 390-5600, extension 245

# What is the Hoarding Task Force

The Clark County Hoarding Task Force was formed in 2005. It combines the resources of many city and county agencies and groups to provide a coordinated response to residential hoarding when it threatens life, safety, and property.

The Hoarding Task Force may be contacted at (937) 390-5600, extension 245

## Member Agencies

Adult Protective Services (DJFS – Adult Services)  
Child Protective Services (DJFS – Family & Children Services)  
City of Springfield Code Enforcement  
Clark County Combined Health District  
Clark County Humane Society  
Clark County Sheriff's Office  
Elderly United  
Mental Health Services for Clark County  
OSU Extension  
Springfield Fire & Rescue  
Bethel Township Trustees  
Mad River Township Trustees  
Springfield Township Trustees

## The Mission of the Hoarding Task Force

To develop a concerted plan to address the:

1. Needs for elder and child care.
2. Needs for animal care.
3. Needs for building and property cleanup.
4. Needs for building and property improvements.
5. Needs for correction of fire hazards.
6. Long-term monitoring of both the physical and mental conditions of the hoarder and any animals remaining in his or her care.

To work together to resolve neglect, abuse, and safety issues associated with hoarding behavior.

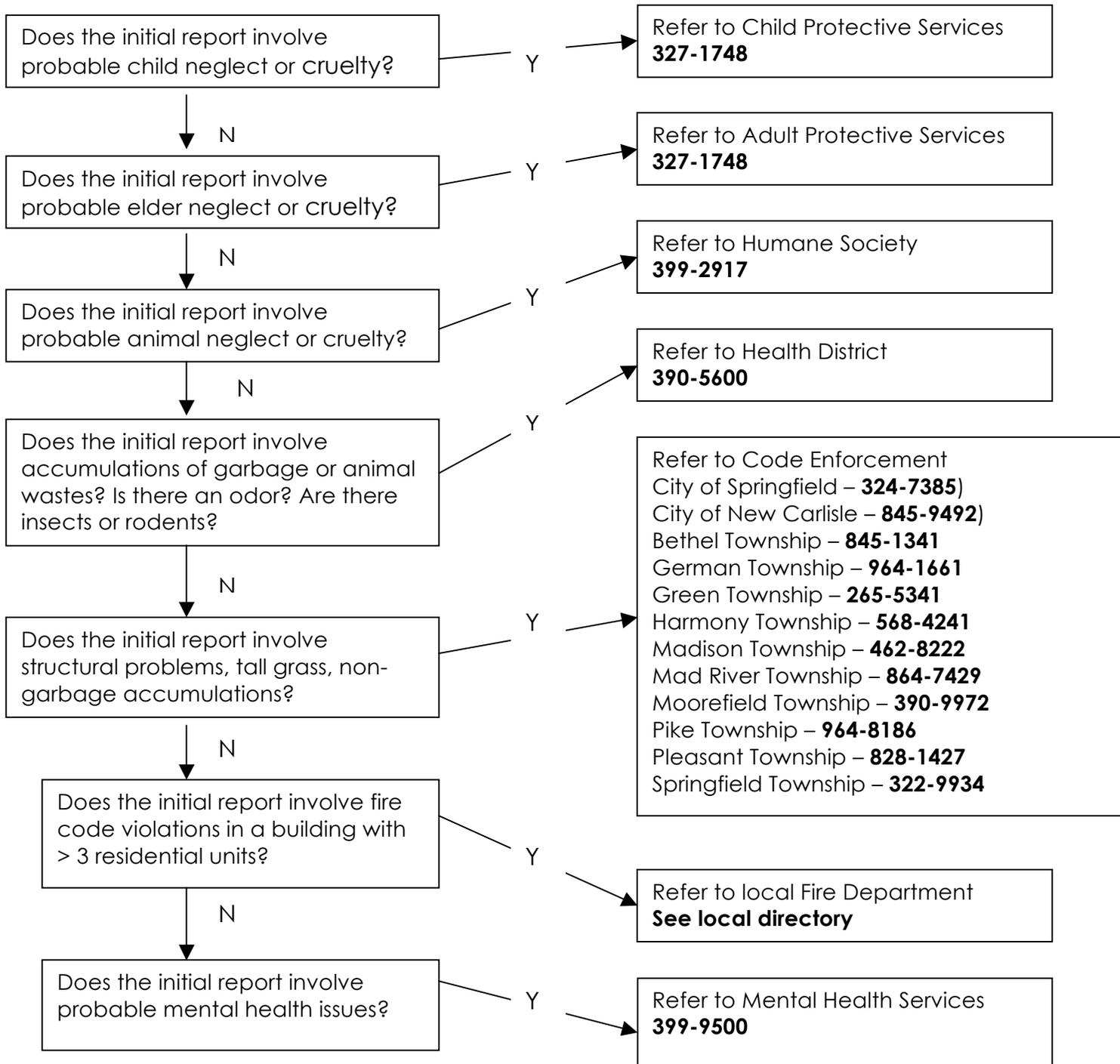
# HOW DOES THE TASK FORCE RESPOND TO REPORTS

Hoarding Task force members may work alone or together to address hoarding issues. Careful assessment of the individual situation is essential for a successful outcome.

1. When a report is received, the RECEIVING AGENCY obtains as much information as possible about the complaint.
2. Based on information received with the initial report, the complaint is assigned to the most appropriate agency – either the receiving agency or another agency – for an INITIAL INVESTIGATION. For instance, a report of large numbers of unfed animals would initially be referred to the Humane Society. A report of large amounts of garbage would initially be referred to the Health District. A report of neglected children would initially be referred to Children’s Services.
3. After the initial inspection, the agency:
  - a. continues to investigate the report as the PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR; or
  - b. refers the report to a more appropriate, PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR.
4. The PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR manages the complaint alone or requests the assistance of one or more SECONDARY INVESTIGATORS from the Task Force or assistance from outside groups to resolve the issue. For instance, the Humane Society may request the help of animal rescue groups to find homes for unwanted pets or the Health District may request help from Jobs and Family Services to assist a neglected or abused elder.
5. If necessary, OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS are sent to the responsible party to obtain resolution of health or safety threats, neglect or abuse issues, or code violations.
6. If necessary, MEETINGS will be held with the responsible party and/or other interested parties or family members to obtain resolution of health or safety threats, neglect or abuse issues, or code violations.
7. If necessary, CITATIONS INTO COURT will be issued to obtain resolution of violations. The level of investigation will depend upon the nature of the complaint and any history of similar complaints.

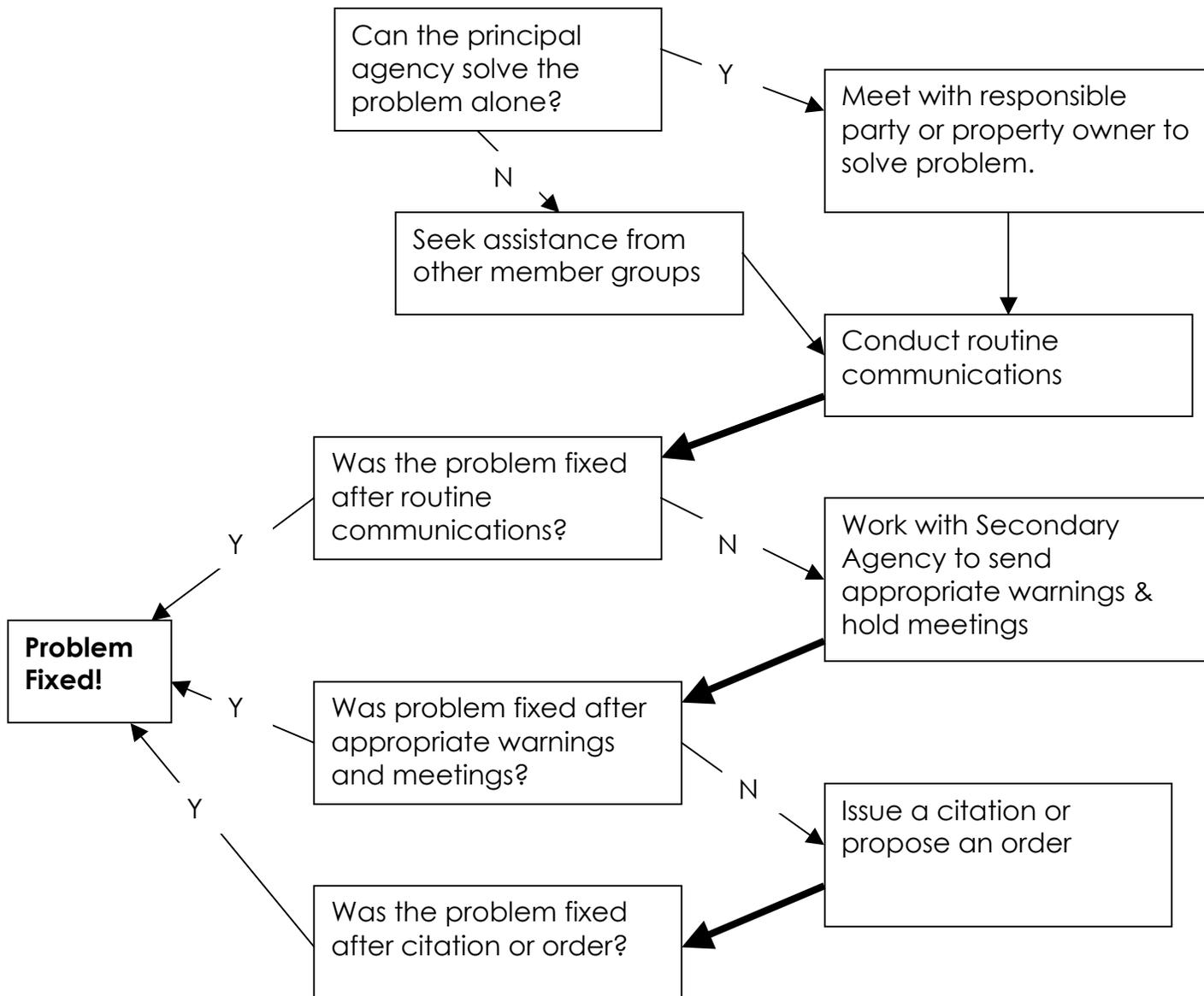
# INVESTIGATION OF HOARDING BEHAVIOR FLOWCHART – PART ONE

1. LOG IN the report of possible hoarding behavior. Obtain as much information as possible about the complaint.
2. EVALUATE the report to determine which member group should be the PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR for an initial investigation.
3. REFER the report to the proper member group or INVESTIGATE the report to determine its validity and severity. Request assistance, if needed, to resolve the issue.



# INVESTIGATION OF HOARDING BEHAVIOR FLOWCHART – PART TWO

4. DETERMINE if there is a need for assistance from other member groups.
5. TAKE ACTION, if necessary, to provide emergency removal of neglected or endangered animals or people, or to fix emergency structural damage or fire hazards.
6. SEEK ASSISTANCE, if needed, from other member groups to solve the problem.
7. SEND an official warning, if needed, to the responsible party or property owner to obtain resolution of health or safety threats, or code violations.
8. HOLD meetings, If needed, with the responsible party or property owner or friends or family members to obtain resolution of health or safety threats, or code violations.
9. OBTAIN orders or ISSUE citations into court, if needed, to obtain resolution of violations.  
The level of investigation will depend upon the nature of the complaint and any history of similar complaints.



# TIPS FOR INVESTIGATION

## IS IT AN IMMEDIATE CRISIS?

Hoarding behavior is frequently NOT an immediate crisis, because it has been occurring for a long time.

## CAN IT BECOME AN IMMEDIATE CRISIS?

Neglect or abuse issues associated with elders, children, or animals may require emergency interventions. Code violations resulting from neglect or collection of materials may require emergency actions. Also, abatement activities undertaken without the person's cooperation could lead to the development of dangerous behaviors.

## TIPS FOR INVESTIGATION

- DO talk to the person face-to-face.
- Do use a gentle approach and let the person tell his/her story.
- DO respect the attachment to possessions by the person.
- DO remain calm and factual, but caring and supportive.
- DO evaluate for safety.
- DO evaluate for human or animal neglect / cruelty.
- DO refer for medical and mental health evaluation.
- DO involve person in seeking solutions.
- DO work with other agencies and groups to maximize resources.
- DON'T force interventions.
- DON'T be critical or judgmental about the environment.
- DON'T use the person's first name unless he/she gives permission.
- DON'T press the person for information that appears to make him/her uncomfortable.

- DON'T make negative, teasing, or sarcastic comments.
- DON'T talk about the person to others as if he/she is not present.

## OTHER ISSUES

1. Explain that, because of the conditions, the hoarder(s) may carry diseases on their clothing or in their stools that may make other people and animals sick when they leave their property.
2. Play the role of “good cop” and “bad cop” with the hoarder(s).
3. Let them know that you have to do your job, but you don't want to have to separate them from their animals by enforcing the order to vacate.
4. Ask them for their help in improving the animals' care, cleaning up the house, and preventing the possible spread of disease.
5. Negotiate short term goals with the hoarder that must be accomplished within some specified time frame. Ask the hoarder to make a definite improvement within a specified period of time that they designate. Barter with them over what is a reasonable time frame as they explain their “special” circumstances. This *first* time frame will allow you to evaluate what the maximum long term *repeat expectations* will be.
6. Explain any Notice of Violation and Order to Correct along with its many implications.
7. Avoid the temptation to condemn the enabler(s) or the enabling situation. A limited but controlled amount of enabling is necessary for *longer term resolution*.

# HOW TO REFER COMPLAINTS TO OTHER AGENCIES and HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER AGENCIES

REMEMBER - Each member agency has limited capabilities or jurisdictions, and has certain requirements for referrals. A description of the member agencies and the process for referral of complaints or requests for assistance is listed below.

<b>AGENCIES</b>	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b>
Adult Protective Services (DJFS – Adult Services)	327-1748
Child Protective Services (DJFS – Family & Children Services)	327-1748
City of Springfield Code Enforcement	324-7385
Clark County Combined Health District	390-5600
Clark County Humane Society	399-2917
Clark County Sheriff's Office	328-2560
Elderly United / CARE Program	324-9000
Mental Health Services for Clark County	399-9500
OSU Extension	328-4607
Springfield Fire & Rescue	324-7610
Bethel Township Trustees	845-1341
Mad River Township Trustees	864-7429
Springfield Township Trustees	322-3459

## **FORMS NEEDED FOR REFERRALS AND REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE – see below**

Hoarding Task Force Referral Form

Requested Housing Inspection – Code Enforcement

Consents for Release of Health Information

## **Adult Protective Services (DJFS – Adult Services)**

### **WHAT DO THEY DO:**

Adult Protective Services investigates referrals regarding abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation of adults (60 and over) living in an independent setting, a group home, or an assisted living facility. They are mandated by the Ohio State Code to investigate referrals of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. They respond within 3 working days for non-emergency referrals and within 24 hours for emergency referrals. They have a grant that allows limited home repairs. They link clients and their family members with a variety of services within the community.

Temporary restraining orders may be issued when they are denied access to the adult's residence. They may provide protective services for an incapacitated person.

### **HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE OR REFER A COMPLAINT:**

The referring agency must give as much information as possible and cite the reasons why they think abuse, neglect, or exploitation is occurring. That is, are “individuals at risk for abuse or neglect due to their circumstances” or are “individuals at risk for self-harm to themselves or to others”?

**Call in reports to (937) 327-1748.**

**Fax in reports to (937) 327-1910.**

**You may need to obtain a “Consent for Release of Health Information” from the client and request feedback from the agency. See below.**

***NOTE – Ohio law requires reports of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of persons 60 years of age or older.***

## **Child Protective Services (DJFS – Family & Children Services)**

### **WHAT DO THEY DO:**

The Clark County Department of Job & Family Services – Family and Children’s Services Division investigates children at risk for abuse and neglect due to their circumstances; provides services for families at risk of abuse or neglect; and arranges adoption and foster care of at-risk children.

### **HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE OR REFER A COMPLAINT:**

The referring agency must determine if there is a probability that neglect, abuse, or exploitation is occurring. That is, are “individuals at risk for abuse or neglect due to their circumstances” or are “individuals at risk for self-harm to themselves or to others”?

**Call in reports to (937) 327-1748.**

**Fax in reports to (937) 327-1910.**

**You may need to obtain a “Consent for Release of Health Information” from the client and request feedback from the agency. See below.**

***NOTE – Ohio law requires reports of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children.***

# City of Springfield Code Enforcement

## **WHAT DO THEY DO:**

The Code Enforcement Division handles complaints on excessive grass or weeds, graffiti, accumulations of junk and trash, junk motor vehicles, exterior structure maintenance, open, vacant, deteriorated and dilapidated structures, condemnation and demolition of structures, clean-ups of accumulated trash and junk, and landlord-tenant problems.

## **HOARDING ISSUES:**

### Exterior

#### **ACCUMULATIONS**

Orders can be issued to remove unlawful accumulations, including feces or infestation, from yards, porches, open sheds, or other outbuildings. If the responsible person does not remove the identified items, Code Enforcement can assign such work to a contractor and remove the items from the property. Non-emergency orders require compliance within 5 days. Failure to comply with an emergency order can result in civil fines or misdemeanor charges.

#### **ANIMALS**

Orders can be issued for violation of Springfield Zoning Code as it relates to farm or exotic animals or for unlawful business enterprises. Failure to comply with a zoning order can result in civil fines or misdemeanor charges.

## **Interior**

### **ACCUMULATIONS**

Depending on the circumstances, orders can be issued to remove items, including feces or infestation, from the interior of structures. Failure to comply with an order can result in civil fines or misdemeanor charges.

### **Animals**

Orders can be issued for violation of Springfield Zoning Code as it relates to farm or exotic animals or for unlawful business enterprises. Failure to comply with a zoning order can result in civil fines or misdemeanor charges.

### **Demolition**

Depending on the circumstances, a structure can be condemned as unsanitary, a fire threat, or other such compelling conditions, and demolition can be pursued. Non-emergency orders require compliance within 30 days. Failure to comply with an order can result in civil fines, misdemeanor charges, or demolition of the structure.

**HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE OR REFER A COMPLAINT:  
Landlord/tenant complaints must be on “Tenant Housing Complaint / Requested Housing Inspection Tenant Questionnaire” form. See below.  
Call in all other complaints to (937) 324-7385.  
Fax in all other reports to (937) 328-3558.**

# Clark County Combined Health District

## **WHAT DO THEY DO:**

The Clark County Combined Health District responds to reports of wide variety of public health nuisance conditions, such as accumulations of trash and garbage; infestations of structures with insects or rodents; odors associated with accumulations of animal manure, garbage, or other rubbish; unsanitary conditions; problems with sewage or water; and indoor air quality.

Warnings are sent for violations of local ordinances and Ohio Administrative Code or Ohio Revised Code. Failure to abate conditions leads to citations into Municipal Court or Board of Health orders. Violations of Board of Health orders can result in citations into Municipal Court.

Under ORC 3707, the Board of Health may arrange for the abatement, control, or removal of conditions that pose a public health threat or a public health nuisance. Usually, such cleanups are coordinated with other agencies.

## **HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE OR REFER A COMPLAINT:**

**Call in report to (937) 390-5600, extension 245.**

**Fax in report to (937) 390-5625.**

# Clark County Humane Society

## **WHAT DO THEY DO:**

The Humane Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the care and adoption of cats and dogs. It responds to reports of abuse and neglect of animals.

Animal hoarding behavior is not necessarily a crime. However, there may be penalties for the outcomes of animal hoarding behavior, such as animal cruelty, failure to license animals, and failure to immunize animals for rabies under ORC 955.

## **HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE OR REFER A COMPLAINT:**

**Call in reports to (937) 399-2917.**

**Fax in reports to (937) 399-2936.**

# Clark County Sheriff's Office

## **WHAT DO THEY DO:**

The Clark County Sheriff's Office provides law enforcement services to Clark County residents.

They provide community services for inmates, such as the P.R.I.D.E. Program, which conducts environmental abatement activities, Community Policing Stations (COPS), and other community education programs.

In hoarding situations:

- they can order children, adults, or animals out of a home, collaborating with Children's Services, Adult Protective Services, and the Humane Society.
- they can take individuals to the hospital for physical and/or mental assessment. The individuals may be admitted if physical or mental issues warrant admission and if beds are available.

## **HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE OR REFER A COMPLAINT:**

**Call in reports to (937) 328-2560.**

**Fax in reports to (937) 328-2515.**

## **Elderly United / CARE Program**

### **WHAT DO THEY DO:**

Elderly United offers many social, recreational, and assistance programs to adults aged 60 or older to promote general well-being, independent living, and socialization.

Many programs are available to assist older adults with housekeeping, lawn care, window washing, emergency financial assistance; leisure activities; hot meals; medical equipment; volunteer activities; medical claims; and other life needs.

They can provide protective homemakers on a limited basis.

### **HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE OR REFER A COMPLAINT:**

**Call in reports to (937) 324-9000.**

**Fax in reports to (937) 324-9005.**

**You may need to obtain a “Consent for Release of Health Information” from the client and request feedback from the agency. See below.**

# **Mental Health Services for Clark County**

## **WHAT DO THEY DO:**

Mental Health Services of Clark County provide individual and group mental health therapy and counseling services, inpatient hospitalization; referrals for evaluations; assistance with finding and paying for safe housing for current clients with mental health and income issues; mediation of landlord/tenant disputes; and assistance with abatement of housekeeping issues for current client housing.

Clients are usually treated willingly. However, limited mandatory treatment options are available for clients who pose certain risky behaviors.

## **HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE OR REFER A COMPLAINT:**

**Call in reports at (937) 399-9500.**

**Fax in reports to (937) 399-2701.**

**You may need to obtain a “Consent for Release of Health Information” from the client and request feedback from the agency. See below.**

### **WHAT DO THEY DO:**

The OSU Extension Services Family and Consumer Sciences program in Clark County strives to build strong families through educational programming. Programs focus on the following issues:

- Improve nutrition and lifestyle choices from infancy through retirement;
- Provide nutrition education with individuals with limited income.
- Manage time, money and other resources;
- Address community health and environmental concerns;
- Manage the multiple roles of work and family life;
- Build strong families through relationship skills, conflict management skills, and shared values.

These issues are addressed through programs offered in the community and newsletters.

The agency intends to offer periodic “Clutter Workshops” to the community.

### **HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE:**

**Call in requests at (937) 328-4607.**

**Fax in requests at (937) 328-4609.**

## Springfield Fire & Rescue

### **WHAT DO THEY DO:**

Springfield Fire & Rescue administers EMS operations and enforces fire and building codes, as defined by Springfield Ordinance and by Ohio State Code. They respond to emergency response requests, issue permits, and take custody of emergency settings.

They are limited in their jurisdiction over residential units to those with greater than 3 units.

### **HOARDING ISSUES:**

Assistance with assessment of situation to determine safety and fire risks and hazards.

Smoke detector installation.

Medical assessment and transport for evacuation.

### **PENALTIES**

Hoarding behavior is not necessarily a crime. However, there may be penalties for the outcomes of hoarding behavior, such as building and fire code violations. The Springfield Fire Department may order certain types of work to be done to address code violations.

### **HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE OR REFER A COMPLAINT:**

Call in complaints to (937) 324-7610.

Fax in complaints to (937) 324-4810.

## Bethel Township Trustees

### **WHAT DO THEY DO:**

The Bethel Township Trustees respond to complaints of excessive grass or weeds, junk motor vehicles, accumulations of trash and rubbish, some issues with open, vacant, deteriorated, or dilapidated structures, and illegal zoning issues.

### **Possible penalties**

Hoarding behavior is not necessarily a crime. However, there may be penalties for the outcomes of hoarding behavior, such as trash or garbage accumulation, lack of mowing, odor nuisances, or building code violations.

Under ORC 505.87, township trustees may order the abatement, control, or removal of nuisance conditions, AND, if the nuisance conditions are not corrected, the township may arrange for the abatement, control, or removal of the nuisance condition.

### **HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE OR REFER A COMPLAINT:**

**Call in complaints to (937) 845-1341.**

**Fax in complaints to (937) 845-9313.**

## Mad River Township Trustees

### **WHAT DO THEY DO:**

The Mad River Township Trustees respond to complaints of excessive grass or weeds, junk motor vehicles, accumulations of trash and rubbish, some issues with open, vacant, deteriorated, or dilapidated structures, and illegal zoning issues.

### **Possible penalties**

Hoarding behavior is not necessarily a crime. However, there may be penalties for the outcomes of hoarding behavior, such as trash or garbage accumulation, lack of mowing, odor nuisances, or building code violations.

Under ORC 505.87, township trustees may order the abatement, control, or removal of nuisance conditions, AND, if the nuisance conditions are not corrected, the township may arrange for the abatement, control, or removal of the nuisance condition.

### **HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE OR REFER A COMPLAINT:**

**Call in complaints to (937) 864-7429.**

**Fax in complaints to (937) 864-0358.**

# Springfield Township Trustees

## **WHAT DO THEY DO:**

The Springfield Township Trustees respond to complaints of excessive grass or weeds, junk motor vehicles, accumulations of trash and rubbish, some issues with open, vacant, deteriorated, or dilapidated structures, and illegal zoning issues.

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## **HOW TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE OR REFER A COMPLAINT:**

**Call in complaints to (937) 322-3459.**

**Fax in complaints to (937) 322-9934.**

# HOARDING BEHAVIOR MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT OPTIONS

Hoarding behavior is seen in a variety of illnesses and can be difficult to place in a diagnostic category. Age of onset and types of behavior can differ from person to person. Hoarding behavior is recognized as both a mental health issue AND a public health problem.

## IS IT AN IMMEDIATE CRISIS?

Hoarding behavior is frequently NOT an immediate crisis, because it has been occurring for a long time. Usually, hasty interventions will not resolve the hoarding behavior, but collaborations involving gradual changes can be moderately successful.

## CAN IT BECOME AN IMMEDIATE CRISIS?

Neglect or abuse issues associated with elders, children, or animals may occur with hoarding behavior. In addition, code violations resulting from neglect or collection of materials may require emergency actions. Abatement activities undertaken without the person's cooperation could lead to the development of dangerous behaviors.

## VOLUNTARY TREATMENT OPTIONS

1. Individual or group therapy for the client
2. Medications and other treatments for the client
3. Workshops for the client
4. Self-help support groups for clients

## MANDATORY (INVOLUNTARY) TREATMENT OPTIONS

Treatment may be involuntary if the client poses 1) a risk to self (physical harm); 2) represents a substantial risk of physical harm to others; 3) represents a substantial or immediate risk of physical impairment or injury because of an inability to care for basic physical needs due to mental illness; or 4) would benefit from treatment in a hospital for his/her mental illness due to evidence of behavior that represents a grave and imminent risk to substantial rights of others or himself.

**A doctor or designated representative must examine the client, probate court must agree, and there must be a hospital bed available.**

# FORMS NEEDED FOR REFERRALS AND REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE